Chamber of Commerce Puts Pressure on Ferry System

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Local business leaders have been working with Kodiak’s legislative delegation over concerns about the ferry Tustumena’s repeated delays in returning to service this summer.

The Alaska Marine Highway System announced this week that the Tusty will miss its scheduled July 23rd return to service because of shoddy work done on welds to watertight compartments in the ship’s hull. When they inspected them last week, the Coast Guard failed about 80 percent of the welds done on the Tusty at the Seward Ship’s Dock Yard.

Trevor Brown, executive director of the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce, wrote in an e-mail that he and his counterpart at the Kodiak visitors center have met with Senator Gary Stevens and Representative Alan Austerman about the delays.

He said both organizations are encouraging their members to write the Governor's office, and will do the same with any calls they receive.

Brown also said that at its July 29th meeting, the chamber board will consider a resolution asking for better ferry service to Kodiak, and he hopes the city and borough will follow suit.

One of the limiting factors affecting service to and from Kodiak is that there are only two state ferries certified for open ocean sailing – the Tustumena, which has been in dry dock since November, and the Kennicott, which must break away from its runs in Southeast to provide a minimum of service between Kodiak and Homer.

Brown defended the chamber over allegations that it hasn’t done anything to put pressure on the Marine Highway System, saying it has sent letters to the state starting almost a year ago concerning a lack of service. He said he found it “curious” that some in Kodiak think they haven’t done anything.

The Marine Highway System said the new date for the Tusty to return to service is now August 20th.